



ASMFC

Fisheries *focus*

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ASMFC Schedules American Lobster Stock Assessment Peer Review: *Summary Document Available*

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission will be conducting an external peer review of the latest American lobster stock assessment, as prepared by the Commission's American Lobster Stock Assessment Subcommittee. The Peer Review, which provides an independent review of the stock assessment report, has been scheduled for May 8 & 9, 2000 at the Radisson Airport Hotel, 2081 Post Road, Warwick, Rhode Island.

The purpose of the external peer review is to examine the quantity and quality of data used in the lobster assessment models, examine the appropriateness of the models chosen to assess the population (in this case Delury, length cohort analysis, and egg per recruit), and evaluate the status of the stock. The peer review will provide advice to lobster biologists on ways to improve the assessment of this species. Advice from the peer review will also be used by the Commission's American Lobster Management Board in developing management strategies for the full implementation of Amendment 3 to the American Lobster Fishery Management Plan. The peer review is not meant to evaluate or suggest management regulations. Management regulations are developed and implemented through the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program.

An impressive panel of lobster assessment biologists has been gathered to review the lobster assessment. They are: Dr. Gerald Ennis (DFO Canada), Dr. John Hoenig (Virginia Institute of Marine Science), Dr. Peter Lawton (DFO Canada),

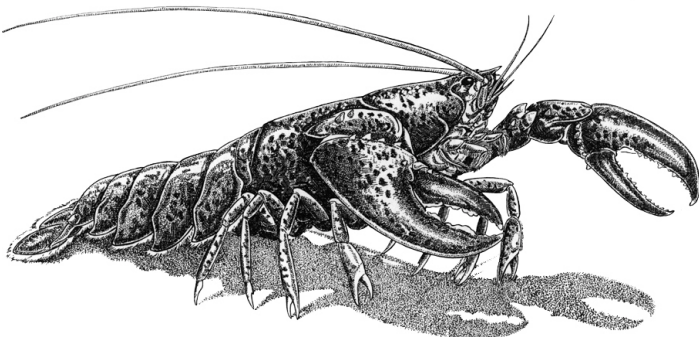
Dr. Robert Muller (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission), Dr. Saul Saila (retired, University of Rhode Island), and Dr. David Sampson (Oregon State University).

The meeting will consist of formal presentations of the American Lobster Stock Assessment Report, including minority opinions on Monday, May 8. A public comment period will be conducted from 2:30 - 5:30 PM on Monday, May 8 and will continue into the morning of Tuesday, May 9, if necessary. Public comments from all attendees are encouraged, however, due to time constraints we would like to discourage any other formal presentations (i.e. overheads or slides) of information other than those scheduled on the agenda. A facilitated discussion of the terms of reference for the peer review will be conducted on Tuesday, May 9. This session is reserved for questions from the panel directed to the presenters or the public in order to clarify issues concerning each of the terms of reference.

Following this meeting a Terms of Reference and Advisory Report will be drafted by the panel members. This report will reflect the consensus advice and recommendations of the panel members on each term of reference. The final report will be presented to the Commission during its Spring Meeting in June 2000. Final reports will be published following the Spring Meeting.

A summary document, which provides a brief overview of the assessment report and the specific details of the peer review meeting, is now available. Copies can be obtained through the Commission's webpage at www.asmfc.org under the Public Input page, or by contacting the Commission. Copies of the assessment report, which is approximately 600 pages in length, are also available by contacting Vanessa Jones, Administrative Assistant, at (202)289-6400 or vjones@asmfc.org.

For more information on the Commission's peer review process or on the upcoming peer review, please contact Dr. Lisa Kline, Director of Research & Statistics, or Geoff White, Fisheries Research Specialist, at (202) 289-6400 or via email at lkline@asmfc.org or gwhite@asmfc.org.



The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species. The fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

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Upcoming Meetings

4/17 & 18:

Searching for Solutions: First Annual Long Island Sound Lobster Health Symposium, Holiday Inn Select, 700 Main Street, Stamford, Connecticut; (203)358-8400.

4/18 & 19 (8:30 AM - 5:00 PM):

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Advisory Committee, Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel, 77 Waterside Drive, Norfolk, Virginia; (800)325-3535.

4/26 & 27:

ACCSP Biological Review Panel, Embassy Suites, Baltimore, Maryland.

4/27 (10AM - 5PM):

Joint ASMFC Atlantic Herring Section and NEFMC Herring Committee, Sheraton Ferncroft, 50 Ferncroft Road, Danvers, Massachusetts; (978)777-2500.

4/28 (9:00 AM - Noon):

ASMFC Northern Shrimp Section, Urban Forestry Center, Elwyn Road, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

5/3 & 4:

New England Fishery Management Council, The Biltmore Hotel, Providence, Rhode Island.

5/8 & 9:

ASMFC External Stock Assessment Peer Review for American Lobster, Radisson Airport Hotel Providence, 2081 Post Road, Warwick, Rhode Island; (401)739-3000.

5/9 - 11:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sheraton, Dover, Delaware.

5/10 & 11:

ASMFC Artificial Reef Technical Committee, Holiday Inn Airport, I-95 & Airport Road, Jacksonville, Florida; (904)741-4404.

5/10 & 11:

ACCSP Advisory Committee, Comfort Inn BWI, 6921 Baltimore Annapolis Boulevard, Baltimore, Maryland; (410)789-9100.

6/5 - 8:

ASMFC Meeting Week, Holiday Inn By the Bay, 88 Spring Street, Portland, Maine; (800)345-5050 or (207)775-2311.

6/12 - 16:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Islanorada, Florida.

We are bombarded daily about technology and how it is changing our lives. You can walk the streets of Washington D.C., or any major city, or any minor city, or any local supermarket for that matter, and observe people using cellular telephones. They help us to stay in contact with our business and our families. How many of us now have e-mail, or are "on the net" for entertainment or just for staying in touch? It was not that long ago that the microwave oven was high technology. Now, if it isn't "dot.com" it's not with it. And by the way, heard of any good tech stocks lately? Is the NASDAQ up 500 or down 500 today, this morning, or in the last twenty minutes? Most young adults today are coming into the workforce having learned electronics and communications skills. Most remarkably, children are growing up accustomed to the electronic world, using technology as we used crayons, with no sense that there is anything extraordinary about it at all.

How about fishing? There was a time when high tech was an otter trawl, or better winches, or monofilament line. Nowadays, electronics is where its at. (Have you seen the latest Microsoft ad? A swarthy, 40-something male sitting on a fishing dock with a trawler in the background and his laptop on a trunk in from of some wooden lobster traps. You can almost make out the federal permit number — I expect someone to call and say, Yeah, that was my boat!!) Just scan the advertising in any commercial or sport fishing publication for the latest gadgets. And communications technology lets us stay in touch with our brokers, partners and family whether we are on ship, boat or beach. Positioning technology lets us know where we are, and gets us back to particular places we have been. EPIRBs use satellites to improve safety at sea. In fishing as in life, technology that is "hot stuff" one day soon becomes commonplace.

Which brings us to the issue of what is on the horizon. All over the world, fishing vessels are being equipped with high tech vessel monitoring systems (VMS). Most of this is in response to the need to find ways for regulatory programs to become more efficient and effective. In the United States, four principal experiments with these systems have been undertaken: a longline fishery in the Western Pacific, the factory trawl fishery in the North Pacific, the Atlantic scallop fishery and the New England groundfish fishery. In two of these, Western Pacific longlines and Atlantic scallops, the VMS systems are mandated by law.

Where is all of this going? Well, the National Marine Fisheries Service would like to figure that out, and embarked on a process to identify a national policy for the deployment and use of VMS. It is working through NOAA's Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) to develop a national policy on VMS. MAFAC, in turn, has asked the three interstate marine fisheries commissions, and through us the eight regional fishery management councils, to assist in using our outreach capabilities to develop stakeholder input to the process. An issues paper has been drafted, and the draft paper was the focus of an initial public workshop held at the Commission's April Meeting Week.

So what are the issues? The one that got the most attention at the Commission workshop was privacy. Many persons object in principle to systems that they feel are too intrusive, and resent the feeling that they are being "watched." On the other hand, some fishermen at the workshop recognized the utility that VMS could have for monitoring what is actually going on in a fishery, and therefore make fisheries management more accurate and relevant. The question of whether to deploy VMS in a fishery is up to the fishery managers, and so would probably not be directly addressed by the policy. But once information is collected, fishery managers can learn a lot; e.g., where fisheries are being conducted by the fleets. The trick is not disclosing any individual's proprietary information. At the moment, VMS is being used primarily for positioning information. If it becomes useful for more information, such as real-time catch reporting, the privacy issues may become even more difficult to develop a policy for.

There are issues concerning whether VMS policies should be applied nationally, or the extent to which regional variation should be allowed. There are economies of scale to be achieved in national approaches. On the other hand, some issues must be dealt differently in different fisheries in order to make sense. For example, it was suggested that system reliability standards should be set on a national basis, but frequency of reporting standards may vary from fishery to fishery. MAFAC will try to craft an approach that recognizes both of these types of needs.

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From the Executive Director's Desk (continued from page 3)

I was impressed that the issue of funding did not spark much interest at the Commission workshop. There are systems in place in the U.S. that rely almost entirely on government funding; and some that rely almost entirely on industry funding. There was some concern that VMS implementation could be a continuing cost as technology improves. On the other hand, it was pointed out that the satellites that VMS depends upon are already in place and not likely to change in the foreseeable future.

Other issues that are considered in the draft issues paper relate to methods of insuring compliance with VMS requirements, establishing priorities for VMS implementation, and international coordination. And there may be other issues that we have just not become aware of yet. The draft VMS issues paper is available at the Commission's web site: www.asmfc.org.

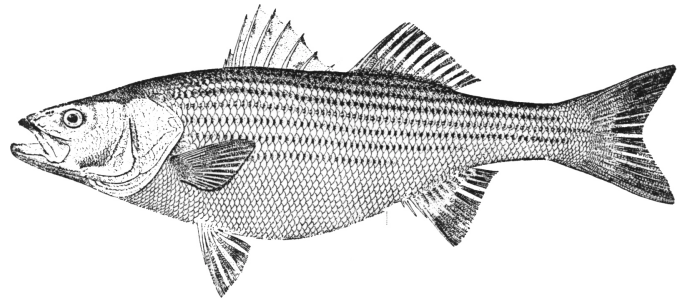
MAFAC will be meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, on April 18-20, 2000 to finish working on the issues paper. After this, the plan is for the commissions and councils to continue their outreach efforts. There will be more opportunity to comment on what the national policy on VMS should say.

Does technology change our lives? Or does it anticipate our needs and make life easier? Perhaps it does not matter. In any event, anyone who is interested in VMS issues should get involved and help MAFAC develop sound advice to NMFS.

Striped Bass Amendment 6 PID Approved for Public Comment: *States to Schedule Public Meetings for May*

On April 6, 2000, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Striped Bass Management Board approved the Public Information Document (PID) for Amendment 6 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Striped Bass for public review and comment. It is anticipated that most Atlantic coastal states from Maine through North Carolina will hold at least one public hearing on the PID, with meetings being scheduled for mid-May. Details on these meetings will be released once all the meetings have been finalized.

Approval of the PID is the first step in developing Amendment 6. The purpose of the PID is to seek public input on



the long-term management of Atlantic coast striped bass stocks. Currently, striped bass is managed under Amendment 5 to the Interstate FMP for Atlantic Striped Bass, which was developed to provide overall guidance and policy to the management of a recovered striped bass resource. Its goals include: preventing overfishing; maintaining a sustainable spawning stock biomass; achieving equitable management measures among jurisdictions; and identifying critical habitats. Over the last several years, a series of addenda have been developed and implemented to detail annual management measures. This process has resulted in increasing frustration on the part of fishery managers, scientists and fishermen – frustration based on not only the lack of consistency in state management measures from year to year, but also the desire for an improved quality fishery, and concerns about increased fishing pressure on larger striped bass. Amendment 6 is being developed to address the above concerns, as well as other long-term scientific, management and policy issues.

The next step is to schedule public information meetings in all interested states. Following the initial stage of information gathering and public comment, the Management Board will evaluate potential management alternatives and the impacts of those alternatives. The Board will then develop a draft amendment to the FMP with the preferred management measures identified for public review. Following that review and public comment, the Board will specify the management measures to be included in the new amendment.

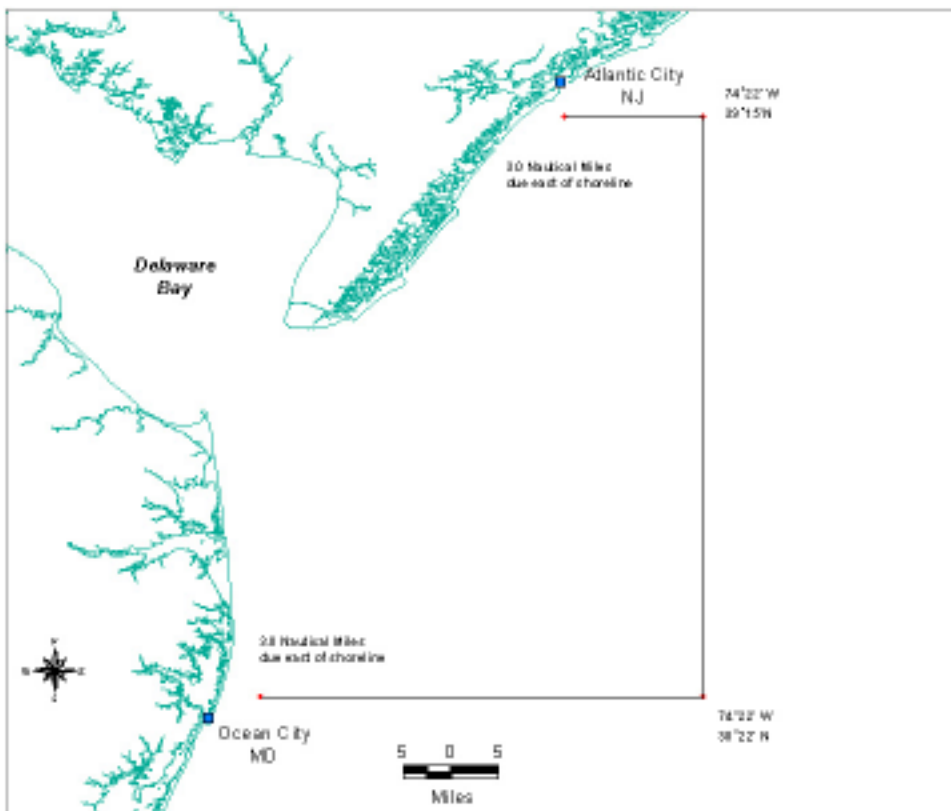
Copies of the Striped Bass PID will be available on April 14, 2000, and can be obtained by either contacting Vanessa Jones, Administrative Assistant, at (202) 289-6400, or via the Commission's webpage under "Public Input" at www.asmfc.org. Comments should be forwarded to Robert Beal, Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 1444 Eye Street, N.W., Sixth Floor, Washington, D.C. 20005; (202)289-6051 (fax). For more information, please contact Robert Beal at (202) 289-6400, ext. 318.

Horseshoe Crab Management Board Approves State Plans to Reduce Coastwide Commercial Bait Landings by 25%

On April 4, 2000, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Horseshoe Crab Management Board approved state plans to implement Addendum I to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Horseshoe Crab. Specifically, the Board approved state plans, which reduce horseshoe crab bait landings to at least 25 percent below 1995 – 1997 landing levels in 2000, for Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. Notably, both Maryland and New Jersey have committed to continue their existing harvest restriction measures in 2000, which are expected to reduce their respective 1995-1997 landings by 70 and 50 percent.

Additionally, the Board granted *de minimis* status to the following states/jurisdictions: Maine, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the District of Columbia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. These states are exempt from implementing the harvest restriction measures established in Addendum I because of their minimal landings (i.e., less than one percent of the coastwide landings). They are responsible, however, for implementing the monitoring and reporting requirements of the plan.

Proposed Offshore Horseshoe Crab Sanctuary Area



Combined, the states' efforts are expected to achieve a landings reduction of 1.15 million horseshoe crabs in 2000, resulting in a coastwide harvest of 1.85 million horseshoe crabs. These efforts, however, may be compromised by Virginia's current proposal, which maintains its established harvest cap of 710,000 crabs. The Management Board did not approve Virginia's proposal as it exceeds the Addendum's required landings cap for Virginia of 152,495 crabs.

The Board also received an update on its recommendation to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to establish an offshore horseshoe crab sanctuary area (no take zone) within a 30 nautical mile radius off the mouth of the Delaware Bay (see map below). NMFS is proposing the designation of an area, which encompasses approximately 1800 square miles of important horseshoe crab habitat in federal waters just outside the Delaware Bay. Public hearings are expected to be held in the affected states later this summer, with the promulgation of a final rule by late fall 2000.

The Horseshoe Crab FMP was approved and adopted by the Commission in October 1998. The goal of the FMP is to conserve and protect the horseshoe crab resource to maintain sustainable levels of spawning stock biomass to ensure its continued role in the ecology of coastal ecosystems, while

providing for continued use over time. In February 2000, the Management Board approved Addendum I, which establishes a coastwide cap on horseshoe crab bait landings to control the harvest and fulfill the goals and objectives of the FMP.

For more information, please contact Thomas O'Connell, Horseshoe Crab Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (410)260-8271 or toconnell@dnr.state.md.us.

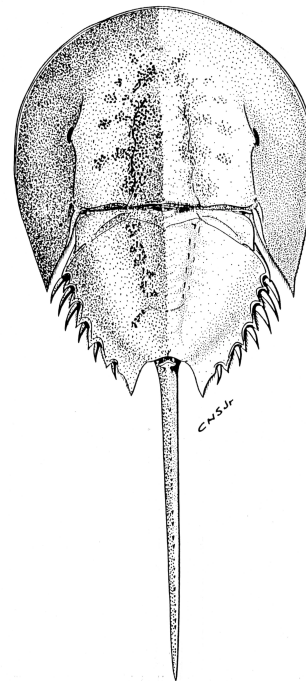
ISFMP Policy Board Recommends Virginia Be Found Out-of-Compliance with Addendum I to the Horseshoe Crab FMP

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP) Policy Board has recommended that the Commonwealth of Virginia be found out-of-compliance, effective May 1, 2000, with the required landings cap provision of Addendum I to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Horseshoe Crab. Specifically, Virginia's state plan for its 2000 fishing season fails to meet the required landings cap of 152,495 horseshoe crabs, which is 25 percent below the Commonwealth's average landings between 1995 – 1997.

This action was based on the recommendation of the Horseshoe Crab Management Board. The Commonwealth of Virginia reported that it is unable to implement the landings cap of Addendum I because it does not meet the Commonwealth's legal standards for fishery management regulations. These standards include measures which define overfishing and establish stock rebuilding targets. Virginia believes that implementing the required landings cap would require legislative action by the General Assembly, which is not scheduled to meet again until January 2001.

The implications of Virginia's inaction are expected to be substantial and have the potential of negating most of the conservation measures gained by reductions in other Atlantic coast states. Under Addendum I, the total coastwide reduction in horseshoe crab landings in 2000 is expected to be 1.15 million crabs. This figure includes additional efforts by the States of Maryland and New Jersey to further reduce their landings by more than the required 25 percent (70 and 50 percent, respectively). By maintaining its established cap of 710,000 crabs, Virginia's harvest would consume nearly half of the coastwide reductions sought by the Management Board through Addendum I.

The recommendation now goes to the full Commission for final action. The Commission will meet in Portland, Maine in June 2000. If the Commission finds Virginia out-of-compliance, the Commission's ISFMP Charter requires the Executive Director to notify the Commonwealth, Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of the Interior of the Commission's determination within 10 working days of the Commission's finding. Upon receipt of the recommendation, the Secretary of Commerce has 30 days to review the recommendation and take final action. If Virginia should remain out-of-compliance with Addendum I, then ultimately the Secretary of Commerce could place a moratorium on Virginia's



Artwork courtesy of Dr. Carl Shuster, Jr., Virginia Institute of Marine Science, College of William and Mary

horseshoe crab fishery (pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 5106). These actions are the result of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, which mandates a cooperative state/federal program to conserve and manage valuable coastal fisheries. It requires the Commission to prepare and adopt FMPs. It also imposes an obligation on each state covered by a FMP to implement and enforce the FMP's regulations in state waters, or else face the possibility of a federal moratorium on fishing for the affected species in that state.

Regardless of what action is taken by Virginia or the Secretary of Commerce this year, any overages in a state's landings cap will be subtracted in the following year(s), based on action taken by the Board this week. Given that Virginia's overage in 2000 is likely to be substantial, Virginia may be required to close its horseshoe crab fishery for several years.

For more information, please contact Thomas O'Connell, Horseshoe Crab Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (410)260-8271 or toconnell@dnr.state.md.us.

Tautog Board Decides to Stay The Course

The Tautog Management Board met on April 3, 2000, to discuss the possibility of adjustments to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) following review of the 30th Northeast Stock Assessment Workshop/Stock Assessment Review Committee's conclusions on the status of tautog stocks. The current FMP, as adjusted by Addendum II, requires that all states/jurisdictions implement management measures to meet the plan's fishing mortality rate of $F = 0.15$ by April 15, 2002. The Technical Committee considered the benefits gained from speeding up the compliance schedule by one year in the analysis of stock size gain projections. This analysis resulted in modest estimates of stock size gain (between 1.3 and 1.4% increase). After reviewing this information, the Management Board decided to maintain the compliance schedule as contained in Addendum II, understanding that the Technical Committee would begin to revisit those items listed in Addendum II for consideration in future FMP adjustment.

For more information, please contact Heather Stirratt, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400, ext. 301.

Northern Shrimp Section Begins Work on Amendment 1

A work session of the Northern Shrimp Section was held on April 3, 2000, to begin establishing the amendment process. While no management decisions were made at this meeting, work session participants reviewed and discussed possible goals and objectives for the northern shrimp amendment process. The work session focused on the objectives of the 1986 fishery management plan (FMP) and topics identified by the Section at previous meetings for consideration. Participants reviewed goals and objectives from recent Commission FMPs as a guide to revising and updating the northern shrimp objectives. The full Section will refine the goals and objectives at its next meeting.

The participants also discussed tasks for the Northern Shrimp Plan Development Team (PDT) for the development of Amendment I. The PDT is responsible for preparing all documentation during the amendment process on behalf of the Section. The Section will assign tasks for the PDT at its next meeting.

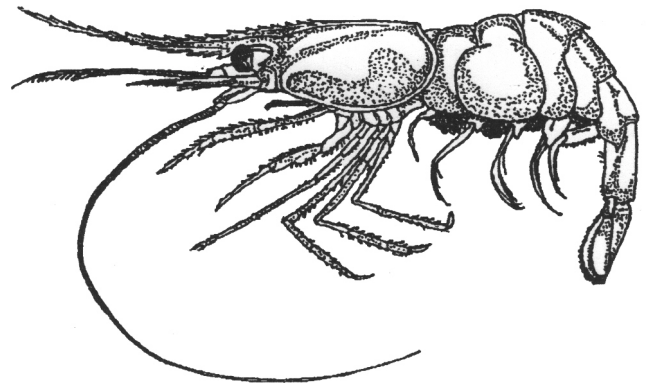
The Section will discuss the timeline for the amendment process, possible goals and objectives at its next meeting, scheduled for Friday, April 28, 2000 at the Urban Forestry Center in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. For more information, please contact Amy Schick, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400, ext. 317.

Atlantic Sturgeon Addendum Under Development

As requested by the Sturgeon Management Board during the Commission's February meeting week, Commission staff has prepared an outline for further development of Addendum I to Amendment I to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Sturgeon. Specifically, the outline, developed with input from the Commission's Technical Committee, Law Enforcement Committee, and the Plan Review Team, addresses the importation of non-US Atlantic sturgeon, and the development of private aquaculture. Commission staff anticipates that the Advisory Panel will also have an opportunity to comment on the draft outline by late April/early May.

In addition to input from within the Commission, staff was provided with the opportunity to participate in a Sturgeon Risk Assessment Workshop sponsored by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Mote Marine Laboratory, and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The objective of this workshop focused on comprehensive identification and description of sturgeon culture risks, the probability of those risks, and effective mitigation options to constructively contribute to the design of an ecologically-sound sturgeon culture management program. The proceedings of this workshop will be incorporated into the draft Addendum and a written report should be made available by the fall of 2000.

For more information, please contact Heather Stirratt, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400, ext. 301.



States Reach Landmark Compromise on Scup Summer Period Fishery: *Emergency Rule for the Scup Fishery Approved*

On April 5, 2000, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved the Emergency Rule for the Scup Fishery, which provides a state-by-state quota-based allocation scheme for the states to implement their summer period scup fisheries. The Board also adopted a revised, coastwide total allowable landings amount of 1,319,270 pounds for the summer period, which extends from May 1 through October 31.

"Reaching this decision was no small feat," stated William P. Jensen, Management Board Chair. Mr. Jensen continued, "The states have worked long and hard to get to this level of agreement, and while no state has gotten exactly what it wanted or needed for its constituents, all states agree that the compromise that was struck provides a workable management program for the summer fishery."

The Board's action was in large part driven by the states' concern over the lack of a workable state/federal management program for the summer period. In the absence of the states' compromise, the summer period fishery would have likely exceeded any quota that could have been agreed to by the Management Board. With this negotiated compromise each state has committed to closing its fishery once its quota has been met.

The Emergency Rule was developed in response to concern over the management program for the summer period scup fishery. Currently, the fishery is managed under two differ-

ent regimes – the Commission's plan uses a state-by-state quota system, while the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's plan uses a quota system. These two regimes have caused difficulties in ensuring that the summer period quota is not exceeded. The purpose of the Emergency Rule was to resolve these difficulties and ensure that the summer period quota is not exceeded, and that the quota is more equitably allocated among jurisdictions and user groups.

The management program that was adopted is a slight modification to one of the 10 options presented at state public meetings this past March. Specifically, the management program includes a state-by-state quota system based on historic landings from 1983 – 1992, with each state closing its fishery once its allocation has been met. Additionally, the states agreed to increase Massachusetts' allocation by one percent through a corresponding proportional decrease of one percent among the other states. Massachusetts will also receive any unused portion of New Jersey's allowable catch if so requested. Any state landings overages will be deducted from that state's quota the following year. The table below provides each state's allocation percentage and corresponding summer period quotas.

The Commission is finalizing the Emergency Rule, which will be available by April 17, 2000. Copies can be obtained via the Commission's webpage under its NEWS page at www.asmfc.org or by contacting Vanessa Jones, Administrative Assistant, at (202)289-6400 or vjones@asmfc.org.

Summer 2000 Commercial Scup Quotas as Established by the Emergency Rule

STATE	% of Summer Quota	Year 2000 Summer Quota (Pounds)
Maine	0.1195%	1,577
New Hampshire	0.0000%	0
Massachusetts	22.5853%	297,961
Rhode Island	55.4727%	731,835
Connecticut	3.1135%	41,075
New York	15.6214%	206,088
New Jersey	2.8792%	37,984
Delaware	0.0000%	0
Maryland	0.0117%	154
Virginia	0.1629%	2,149
North Carolina	0.0246%	325
Total	100.00%	1,319,270

American Lobster Board Prepares for External Lobster Assessment Peer Review

The American Lobster Management Board met on April 4, 2000, in Alexandria, Virginia with a full agenda of issues to discuss and resolve. First and foremost, the Board was provided an update on the long awaited external peer review for American lobster, which is scheduled for May 8 & 9, 2000 in Providence, Rhode Island (see cover story on page 1). Recognition was given to all those who have worked hard in the development and finalization of the stock assessment document, from the American Lobster Stock Assessment Subcommittee and Technical Committee to Commission staff. The Board enthusiastically awaits the findings of the peer review, which will be formally presented to the Board at its next meeting, during the Commission's June Meeting Week in Portland, Maine (June 3-6, 2000).

The State of New Jersey requested an exemption from portions of Addendum I that relate to trap limits and the trap tag system. The majority of New Jersey lobstermen have both a state and federal permit to fish for lobster. The federal regulations for lobster management, released in December 1999, implement a different approach to trap limits than Addendum I, which the Board approved in August 1999. Specifically, the federal regulations implement a 800-trap limit in nearshore federal waters (approximately 30 to 40 miles offshore) and a 800-trap limit in offshore federal waters beginning May 1, 2000. Addendum I established trap

limits based on an individual lobsterman's historic trap levels during the reference period. The difference in the trap limits creates a great deal of confusion as to which trap limits apply to each individual fisherman. In light of the National Marine Fisheries Service advance notice of federal rulemaking, which will consider trap limits based on history, New Jersey requested an exemption from portions of Addendum I until the Federal regulations are modified to be consistent with Addendum I or until September 2000, whichever occurs first. The Board approved New Jersey's request for an due to the differences between proposed state and existing federal lobster regulations. All Federal lobster permit holders in New Jersey will continue to be restricted to the Federal trap limits and trap tag system.

The Board also reviewed a proposal to allow conservation equivalency for the v-notch provision in Amendment 3. The proposal arose out of an effort to resolve ongoing litigation. The Board approved consideration of this change in Amendment 4, and designated the amendment's development as a high priority. Rhode Island and Massachusetts offered any necessary staff support to aid in the timely development of Amendment 4.

For more information, please contact Amy Schick, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at 202)289-6400, ext. 317.

ACCSP Gears-up for Commercial Harvesters' Pilot Study

Fisheries management agencies along the East Coast are implementing a data collection pilot study for economic and social data, along with traditional harvest statistics -- the result will be better, more consistent fisheries data.

For some time now the fishing industry has been urging fisheries managers to give greater consideration to economic and social factors when forming and evaluating fisheries management policies. In response, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), a state and federal program comprised of 23 Atlantic coast fisheries management agencies, plans to implement a new coastwide data collection system.

This spring and summer commercial fishermen, along with party and charterboat operators, will be asked to participate in a pilot study to test new methods of collecting data. Specifically, participating vessel owners and captains will be asked to provide economic and social information about their business, themselves, and their crew.

"Better data means better management decisions for the fishing industry," said ACCSP Program Manager Joe Moran. "I urge fishermen to participate in the pilot study, and help us build a better data collection system."

The analysis of long-term economic and social information will help managers understand the economic impacts of proposed fishery management regulations on different sectors of the industry and different fishing communities. Currently, data are collected through logbook/trip ticket programs and permit information. These data combined with the pilot study data can be used to provide a comprehensive picture of the fishery.

For more information related to this study, please contact Joe Moran, ACCSP Program Manager, at (202) 289-6400 or visit www.accsp.org.

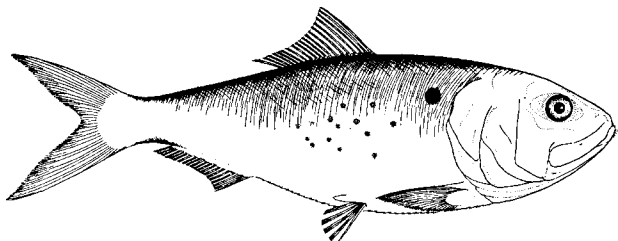
Menhaden Board Reviews Overfishing Definition Options

On April 5, 2000, the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board met for the first time under its interim makeup, which includes membership from all interested states and the industry. Specifically, the Board reviewed options for an overfishing definition which would be included in the draft amendment to the 1992 Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP).

The Board discussed two different broad categories for defining overfishing -- fishing mortality based strategies, and stock biomass based strategies. Fishing mortality based strategies are designed to prevent the fishery from removing individuals from the population at too fast a rate, while stock biomass strategies are designed to ensure that a sufficient biomass or stock size is maintained in order to avoid compromising the population's ability to replenish itself. The Board postponed taking action on this issue pending further analyses by the Stock Assessment Subcommittee. The menhaden stock assessment is due to be updated and presented to the Atlantic Menhaden Advisory Committee (AMAC), which is the current technical and advisory body for menhaden, on April 18-19, 2000. Following that, AMAC will prepare its annual report, which will then be presented to the Board during the Commission's Spring Meeting Week, scheduled for June 5 - 8, 2000, in Portland, Maine.

The Menhaden Board approved the addition of another option regarding the potential makeup of the Board under Amendment 1, which will be included in the public hearing draft. As such, there will now be two options for future board makeup, one that reflects the current structure of all other Commission management boards with a separate advisory panel, and a new option whereby industry representatives would be members of the Management board in addition to all of the states/agencies that have a declared interest in the species.

For more information, please contact Dr. Joseph Desfosse, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400, ext. 329.



Atlantic Herring Advisors and Section to Meet

In preparation for the annual specifications meeting, the Atlantic Herring Advisory Panel will meet on April 26, 2000, at the Sheraton Ferncroft Hotel in Danvers, Massachusetts. The meeting will be held jointly with the New England Fishery Management Council's Herring Advisors, many of whom are members of both groups. This meeting will take place the day before the joint meeting of the Commission's Atlantic Herring Section and the Council's Herring Oversight Committee.

The purpose of both meetings will be to review public comments gathered in late February during the scoping hearings for controlled access. Among the other topics slated to be discussed during both meetings are consideration of measures to provide access to the resource for the fixed gear fishery; possible changes to the spawning closures through an addendum to the Commission's Amendment 1; and possible adjustments to the area-specific total allowable catches. The advisors will also be electing a new Chair to serve for the next two years.

For more information please contact: Dr. Joe Desfosse, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400, ext. 329.

NMFS Disapproves South Atlantic Council's *Sargassum* FMP

In December 1998, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) completed a fishery management plan (FMP) for the pelagic seaweed, *Sargassum* (see January 1999 issue of *Habitat Hotline Atlantic*, pp. 1-2). The FMP proposed to phase out the harvest of this seaweed based on concern over *Sargassum* as important and essential fish habitat for several fish species managed by the Council. Limited harvest would have been allowed until January 1, 2001. After this date, harvest and/or possession would have been prohibited in federal waters (3-200 miles offshore).

In December 1999, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) disapproved the Council's *Sargassum* FMP based on the failure of the FMP to specify a maximum sustainable yield (MSY) or to adequately justify the specified optimum yield (OY) of zero. Although it may seem strange to think of determining these values for a seaweed, the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that these values be determined for any fishery managed under an FMP.

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"Today your Chairman has asked me to speak briefly about . . . our coastal marshes and estuarine waters. These are areas which play a large role in the production of fish and wildlife for recreation and for commercial purposes. I'm sure I don't need to spend time stressing the importance of these areas to an audience such as yours. The subject has often been discussed by you at previous meetings.

"It is not the importance of these areas for fish, shellfish and wildlife which needs to be stressed, but rather the importance of being constantly alert and ready to act to protect and preserve them. We must seize every opportunity to present the fish and wildlife point of view about such areas in terms which developers, dam builders and dredgers understand and accept. "Ready to act" in this respect means having authoritative knowledge, legislative backing, and where necessary, good alternative proposals to minimize, at least, the bad effects on our fish and wildlife resources.

". . . Quite apart from these big development projects, there is another real danger to our coastal resources which is developing at a rapid rate. It involves the so-called pesticides. Big chemical companies seem to be vying with each other to produce more and more deadly compounds to kill off insects, weeds, plant diseases and other pests in the shortest possible time. I'll be darned if I can quarrel with anyone who wants to get rid of mosquitoes and flies, noxious weeds, forest insects, and water hyacinths that choke up navigation channels. However, when you spread about 3 billion pounds of pesticides sprays to do it — as we did in this country last year — you want to know what you are doing. The plain truth is we do not now have adequate knowledge on how all these new pesticides affect our fisheries and wildlife. If we are not to reap some resource tragedies, we had better find out in a hurry about the effects of existing formulations and keep currently informed about the new compounds, how they are going to be used and what they will do — not just to the pests but to our important fish and wildlife resources. A very valuable recreational and commercial fishery industry is directly involved. Wildlife interests also have a big stake.

". . . I have a few final thoughts I want to leave with you. It does no good just to complain about the things which have gone wrong in the past, which have harmed the important fishing values of coastal areas. The solution lies not in continuing conflicts between various agencies over projects, but in getting together, forgetting what has happened to date, and working out programs for the future which meet the needs of fish and wildlife as well as other primary objectives. The real need is to get fish and wildlife equal status with other program purposes.

"Interestingly, these future programs are going to require two ingredients we have long talked about — increased research and improved management — if the problems I have mentioned today are to be solved. It obviously will take more research than we have had in the past to get the answers to the pesticide problem. Certainly, the development of new common denominators for action of fish and wildlife for all agencies dealing with land and water use programs will be one of the greatest gains we have ever made in resource management."

From "The Need for Protecting and Preserving Our Coastal Marshes and Estuaries," Remarks of the Hon. Ross L. Leffler, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife, Department of the Interior, to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, 16th Annual Meeting, New York, New York, September 27, 1957.



NMFS Disapproves South Atlantic Council's *Sargassum* FMP (continued from page 11)

The major difference between the Council FMP and the management actions suggested by NMFS in its disapproval notice stem from a disagreement about whether a total prohibition of harvest is necessary in order to protect, conserve, and enhance the abundance of this seaweed and its associated fauna. NMFS has suggested "several less restrictive management options that would allow the continued, but restricted, harvest of *Sargassum*, while ensuring minimal impacts to the habitat and the fauna associated with the *Sargassum* habitat, including the use of an on-board observer." Since *Habitat Hotline Atlantic* first covered this story, the State of North Carolina has finalized its position as one of support for the prohibition on harvest or possession of *Sargassum* after January 1, 2001. The one current harvester of *Sargassum* in federal waters is from North Carolina.

In response to NMFS' disapproval, the Council revisited the issue at its recent meeting in Tybee Island, Georgia during the week of March 9. The Council voted to resubmit a modified FMP for *Sargassum* that would allow very limited harvest off the coast of North Carolina. More information about the meeting is available from the Council office at (843)571-4366.

The essential fish habitat (EFH) element makes this contentious issue even more interesting. EFH was designated by the Council approximately a year ago, but it is only now becoming integrated into fisheries regulation. This may indeed be considered its first test case for the South Atlantic region. Since *Sargassum* is a seaweed and not a marine animal, an additional challenge lies in applying assessment and management processes developed for fish. On top of this, consider that endangered sea turtles are involved, and the issue becomes even more complicated and contentious.

Numerous environmental and fishing groups are unhappy with NMFS' disapproval of the FMP. The National Coalition for Marine Conservation (NCMC) is lobbying for designation of the entire Sargasso Sea as a marine protected area, and has

urged the U.S. government to take the lead internationally in working toward this goal. NCMC contends that allowing harvest in U.S. waters will make it difficult to get international agreement on prohibiting harvest in international waters.

Controversy and contention are not new to fisheries management and seem to be part of the process when considering and trying to balance all interests (biological, ecological, and socio-economic). What is new is the element of EFH, and how it will be incorporated into the process and decision-making.

For more information, please contact Roger Pugliese, with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, by phone at (843)571-4366 or via email at Roger.Pugliese@noaa.gov; or Steve Branstetter, with the National Marine Fisheries Service, by phone at (727)570-5305 or via email at steve.branstetter@noaa.gov

Catch and Release Symposium Tackles Tough Salt Water Fishing Issues

Over 130 fishery researchers, managers, and outdoor media leaders heard new study results and debated the many complexities of catch and release fishing issues in coastal waters. Organized by the Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program, Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) of the College of William and Mary, the National Symposium on Catch and Release in Marine Recreational Fisheries attracted participants from nearly every U.S. coastal state as well as Canada, Norway, Bermuda, and Australia.

The symposium's principal objective was to define marine catch and release fishing. The meeting was organized to bring together those most experienced with catch and release research and fisheries issues, providing a forum in which they could closely examine, critique, and reach consensus on catch and release research, management issues, and marine angler education-outreach efforts. Out of this process came two action agendas in which the most critical issues and concerns were identified and ranked. The agendas also addressed what actions would provide solutions, better information and data, or possible changes warranted in the *status quo*.

A significant meeting element, paramount to useful products coming from the symposium, was that participants used

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Catch and Release Symposium Tackles Tough Salt Water Fishing Issues (continued from page 12)

pre-conference survey results to come quickly to some basic understandings. The most important concept agreed upon was, "Catch and release fishing, especially in saltwater, is not a single issue, but a highly varied mixture of often complex issues".

Many factors affect what "catch and release fishing" actually means to individuals and groups of anglers. For example: What specific fishery are you referring to? What fishing situation and regulations apply? What shape is the given fish stock in, i.e., if in good shape, interest and motivation for catch and release may not be at all as great as if the fish stock were in "trouble"? Who typically catches most of the fish in question, i.e., commercial or recreational fishers? Who is doing the fishing, e.g., native Americans or other ethnic groups (individuals of African American, Hispanic, Southeast Asian, East Asian, Mid-East backgrounds, etc.).

The highest ranking issues or concerns were determined during the final days of the symposium using a team-facilitated approach aided by participants interacting anonymously and efficiently through a 50 laptop computer network. Results were outlined in a Research-Fisheries Management Action Agenda and an Education-Outreach Action Agenda.

Of the top 16 ranked Research-Management priorities, the first three were: (1) More hook-release research needs doing (especially using new telemetry tagging techniques, given that mortalities are being documented to be strongly species and fishing-water conditions specific); (2) Regarding catch and release fishing outreach, how do fishery scientists, managers, writers, and educators better convey factual information, i.e., "the truth" about catch and release mortality to the public and anglers (e.g., pros and cons of catch-release fishing in specific fisheries and under variable fishing conditions, etc.)?; and (3) Given practically no available data, carry out more research on long term effects of catch-release fishing on marine fish species and their populations.

Similarly, 21 top ranked needs were agreed upon under the Education-Outreach Action Agenda, indicating the difficulty and complexity of marine fisheries catch-release concerns. The top three issues were: (1) Develop an overall media/communication strategy for better addressing catch and release fishing "information and education" needs; (2) Form angler/industry/government agencies outreach-education partnerships (to reduce redundancy and improve the accuracy and effectiveness of educational and outreach programming, ways of



packaging and getting the best, most practical information into the hands of anglers); and (3) Better define the varied elements, concerns, and problems associated with the obviously complex issues comprising marine anglers actual practice and acceptance of an effective catch and release fishing ethic which will positively impact salt water recreational fisheries.

More detailed information on the symposium is available. For example, the VIMS Web site www.vims.edu/adv/catch/ will link to a new site www.vims.edu/adv/catch/release. The new site will include abstracts of presentations and posters (research on circle hooks, hook damage, use of pop-up satellite tags and other telemetry tags to examine longer-term hook-release mortality, and changing attitudes about catch and release fishing), and the complete listing of Research and Education-Outreach Action Agenda items.

A mailing list is also being developed for those individuals interested in being notified of the availability of an angler-oriented symposium "summary publication," to be approximately 10-12 pages in length and available by late spring. Also, persons may be placed on a separate mailing list for announcements concerning ordering the technical Proceedings of the Catch and Release Symposium. The proceedings is being published by the American Fisheries Society and is planned to be available sometime in fall (estimated per copy cost is expected to be in the range of \$50).

One must specify which mailing list (summary publication, Technical Proceedings, or both lists) they wish to be placed on. Contact Ms. Maxine Butler, Sea Grant Marine Advisory Services VIMS, Gloucester Point, VA 23062, or (804-684-7173; FAX 804-684-7161; email: maxine@vims.edu).

Secretary Implements Final Rule for Spiny Dogfish Fishery Management Plan

Effective April 3, 2000, the Secretary of Commerce, William M. Daley, has implemented the final rule for the Spiny Dogfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Secretary also established quota-based fishery management measures for the 2000-2001 fishing season beginning May 1, 2000. The joint plan, developed and adopted by the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils, is intended to conserve and rebuild the spiny dogfish stock along the Northeastern Atlantic coast of the United States.

The Secretary delayed implementation of the FMP to allow the Mid-Atlantic and New England Councils to reach an



agreement on the annual quota for the upcoming fishing season. Subsequently, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council reaffirmed its original position and endorsed a quota of 2.9 million pounds. The New England Council modified an earlier decision and recommended a quota of 14 million pounds. The Secretary considered the Councils' recommendations and established a quota of fourmillion pounds, a trip limit of 600 pounds from May 1 - October 30, and a trip limit of 300 pounds from November 1 - April 30.

The different trip limits are designed to equalize the burden on fishermen in the two regions because it is based on their historic harvest levels. The spiny dogfish fishery occurs primarily in New England waters during the first half of the fishing season (May 1 - October 30) and in the Mid-Atlantic during the second half (November 1 - April 30). The New England council had proposed a 7,000 pound trip limit, while the Mid-Atlantic council had suggested a 300 pound limit.

The Secretary also established a 500,000 pound experimental fishery to determine the feasibility of targeting spiny dogfish males rather than females. This experimental fishery is designed to utilize spiny dogfish caught as bycatch and develop gear and fishing methods that target males, thereby allowing the female population to rebuild.

"The aim of the experimental fishery is to see if it is feasible to better utilize spiny dogfish caught as bycatch," said NOAA

Fisheries' Dalton. "I also want to make sure that we use this opportunity to improve our understanding of this valuable resource." Among the goals of an experimental fishery would be to develop gear and fishing methods that target males rather than females, and that reduce bycatch.

The final rule also implements a prohibition on "finning;" new permit and reporting requirements for commercial vessels, operators, and dealers; a framework adjustment process; an annual review of the FMP; and the establishment of a Spiny Dogfish Monitoring Committee.

Dogfish are a small shark, with a life span of more than 35 years. Females mature at about 12 years of age and gestate young for nearly two years, producing litters of 6 to 18 pups. Females become larger than males and have been the target of the fishery for that reason. Since the targeted fishery began in the early 1990s, the population of females has declined to about 25 percent of its size in the 1980s. The market

opened for U.S. dogfish in the late 1980s, owing to a rapid decline of the European dogfish stocks because of a targeted fishery.

Upcoming Commission Meetings

Spring Meeting

June 5 - 8, 2000

Holiday Inn By the Bay, 88 Spring Street, Portland, Maine; (800)345-5050 or (207)775-2311

August Meeting

August 21 - 24, 2000

Radisson Hotel Old Town Alexandria, 901 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia; (703)683-6000

59th Annual Meeting

October 15 - 19, 2000

Adam's Mark, Clearwater Beach, Florida

MANAGING MARINE RECREATIONAL FISHERIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY: *Meeting the Needs of Managers, Anglers, & Industry*

June 25-28, 2000
San Diego, California

Conveners:

National Marine Fisheries Service and
National Sea Grant College Program of the
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The marine angling public numbers more than nine million people. From the surfcaster to the deepwater troller, marine anglers invest time (more than 100 million days a year) and personal resources in boats, fishing equipment, travel and all of the other expenditures resulting in an annual contribution of \$7 billion to the U.S. economy.

The purpose of this Symposium is to bring together the diverse segments of the marine recreational fishing community (including federal and state marine resource and policy managers, members of marine fishery conservation and advocacy organizations, marine industry representatives, researchers, academics, outdoor media, and the marine angling public) and provide the opportunity and format to explore and discover improved direction for resource managers, the resource, and the angling public.

The goal is to collectively assess the current strengths and weaknesses of the myriad elements which shape today's marine recreational fishing experience.

The objective is to build a blue print for marine recreational fishing that not only identifies challenges and opportunities but provides guidance on means to enhance the fishery resources and the fishing experience as we enter the 21st Century.

The sponsors include these organizations:

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- National Sea Grant College Program
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
- Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
- Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
- American Sportfishing Association
- BOAT U.S.
- Recreational Fishing Alliance
- Pure Fishing
- California Department of Fish & Game

Symposium Themes:

- Critiquing the adequacy of current management regimes and institutions that govern marine fishery resources and the fishing experience.
- Assessing the value of recreational data and statistics. What improvements in scope and methodology are needed for improved resource management?

- Anticipated changes that will shape the marine recreational fishing experience in the 21st Century.
 - Changing demographics of the saltwater angler
 - Factors that influence angler interest and participation.
 - What constitutes a "quality" fishing experience?
 - New angler recruitment: how important is it; how does it balance with resource management and conservation needs?
 - Nontraditional saltwater anglers - who are they, what impact will they have in the future and, what is needed to accommodate their participation?
- The role of the angler
 - Catch and release in the marine environment - does it make a difference?
 - Improving the value of angler tagging programs - do good or feel good?
 - The impact of saltwater tournaments on the angling community and the fishery resource.
- Retaining and increasing angler interest and participation.
 - Competing with other leisure activities that occupy people's time and money
- Fishery resource stock enhancement
 - Artificial reefs and other fish attractants - are they fish producers or concentrators?
 - Aquaculture - can it play a useful role in marine recreational fishing?
- Education, information and outreach
 - Are current efforts more output than outcome oriented?
 - What does the angling public need to know and what improvements need to be made to provide beneficial information?
- Emerging Management Issues
 - Marine protected areas/reserves, quotas, bag limits, in-season closures - balancing resource management goals with angler rights
 - Marine angler licensing - a benefit or a burden?
- Visions for the future
 - What is needed by each of the stakeholders in the marine recreational fishing community to enhance their position and contribution, in the 21st Century, to an improved marine recreational fishing experience and a sustainable fishery resource.

For more information about the Symposium and availability of poster session and exhibit space, please contact: Dallas Miner by phone at (301)427-2015 or via email at Dallas.Miner@NOAA.gov.

ASMFC Comings & Goings

This month the Commission said goodbye to longtime Sport Fish Restoration Coordinator, Richard Christian. Richard began work with the Commission in 1992, as the Commission's first Sport Fish Restoration Coordinator and liaison to the three East Coast regional fishery management councils. In his eight-year tenure, Richard played a major role in the development of regional and national recreational fishing policy. He was also very involved in the coordination of artificial reef development and management activities along the Atlantic coast.

Richard is departing to take a position with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a Fishery Biologist. Although he will be greatly missed at the Commission, we wish him all the best with his new position!

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1444 Eye Street, N.W., 6th Floor
Washington D.C. 20005

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